



CALIFORNIA TEAMSTERS LOCAL 911

PUBLIC, PROFESSIONAL & MEDICAL EMPLOYEES UNION, THE COUNTIES OF LOS ANGELES,
ORANGE, RIVERSIDE, SAN DIEGO, IMPERIAL, SAN LUIS OBISPO, SAN BERNARDINO, SANTA BARBARA AND VENTURA

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An Affiliate of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Raymond B. Whitmer
Secretary-Treasurer



San Diego City Council
San Diego Civil Center
202 "C" St., San Diego, CA 92101

Re: San Diego Lifeguards, City of San Diego COVID-19 response

March 30, 2020

VIA EMAIL

Dear members of the San Diego City Council:

It is our understanding the San Diego Fire Department has ordered certain San Diego Lifeguards known to have been exposed to a confirmed positive COVID-19 co-worker to return to work. This decision was ostensibly based on changes to CDC guidelines, effective March 7, 2020. The City and San Diego Fire Rescue Department has interpreted those changes as affirmative direction to return its public safety employees exposed, but not symptomatic, back to work.

The City's decisions to adopt CDC guidelines are just that- guidelines to establish minimum safety protocol. Those guidelines do not prohibit the City from providing a greater degree of precaution for any of its public safety employees against the spread of the virus than that minimum. In fact, it is mandated to pursue reasonable measures to maximize the public health. The City's unilateral decision has increased the risk of exposure to our members and their families.

The City had been placing exposed guards in quarantine up until last week. Since that time, four lifeguards have tested positive for the virus, and another seventeen have been presumptively diagnosed. Clearly there is an outbreak cluster in lifeguard services.

Lifeguard Chief Steward Chris Vanos and other authorized Teamsters 911 representatives have inquired through the appropriate chain of command what steps have been undertaken by the City to address this concentrated outbreak. Specifically, we have asked whether the City will de-contaminate lifeguard workstations at Ocean Beach, Mission Beach and South Mission Beach. The Union has also asked whether the Lifeguards will have their workstations cleaned in similarly professional manner as certain Fire Stations. We have yet to receive any response.

Teamsters 911 has also asked what steps the City has made to track the employees who have been exposed to the four guards confirmed positive and the

other guards pending test results. As companion to that question, the Union has asked what measures the City has undertaken towards tracing the source of the current cluster of infection within the lifeguard unit.

Teamsters has also inquired whether the City is planning to augment staffing to minimize exposure, and any other steps the City is taking to reduce community spread within the guards and their families. All of these concerns remain unresolved.

Because of potentially misleading statements made by the City, Teamsters is compelled to confirm the existing representative capacities of its union leadership. Timely response to this rapidly changing crisis requires the Union to avail itself to all its resources. Teamsters 911 representatives are selected by Teamsters 911. Lifeguard Sergeant Ed Harris is, and has been, authorized to speak on behalf of the Union. Any implication to the contrary by the City is categorically false. The City cannot plausibly feign confusion as to whether Mr. Harris represents the Union, as he attended the most recent contract negotiation meeting with the City just one week ago, on March 24, 2020.

The Fire Department has also recently mischaracterized an appearance by Lifeguard Chief steward Chris Vanos in a video-recorded public service announcement as the Union's agreement to the City's change. However, a video selectively edited in this manner does not satisfy the City's meet and confer obligation, and it is certainly not a writing signed by Teamsters 911 agreeing to any changes to the terms and conditions of Lifeguards' employment. Further, that video was created before any the guards had been confirmed positive. The subsequent identification of the cluster requires an accelerated response by the City, specifically targeted at this known threat currently confronting the lifeguard service.

This serves as Teamsters 911's request to meet and confer on all the questions affecting terms and condition of employment of the San Diego Lifeguards, identified herein. In the interim, we request the City revert to the practice of quarantining lifeguards until we have meet, as the City had been quarantining guards exposed to COVID-19 up until March 26, 2020. Please advise to the City's availability to discuss this matter at its earliest opportunity.

Thank you very much,

Chris Vanos
TEAMSTERS 911
San Diego Lifeguards

Neil Sholander
TEAMSTERS 911
Business Representative

NS: sg
Cc: Ed Harris